2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

river island rather than a saltwater ocean island.[3] The islands just off the coast of Charleston include James, Johns, Wadmalaw, Edisto, and Yonges, among many others. The Sea Islands of Georgia extend on the northern coast from Harris Neck; on the southern coast they include Sapelo, Darien, St. Simons, and St. Marys.

The Sea Islands and surrounding areas were a mere submerged portion of the continental shelf during the early geologic history of North America. As time passed, the ocean retreated to its present position, and the low flatlands left behind became known as the Georgia and Carolina low country.[4]

The Sea Islands are tranquil, flat, swampy lands with elevations ranging from near sea level to slightly over 100 feet. The climate is generally mild throughout the year, with very few recordings of drastically low temperatures. The coastal areas are characterized by slightly higher annual temperatures than other areas, primarily because of their proximity to the ocean.[5] The climatogram shown in Figure 1 illustrates the changes at various times of the year.

The Sea Island area is characterized by deep rivers snaking along the coast and dividing the land into countless large and small islands. The sandy soil, which drains inadequately, places economic and developmental constraints on the area. Road building is extremely difficult in spots; some islands still have no paved roads. The 1979 regional housing market analysis for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester (BCD) Council of Governments estimated that 90 percent of the land area within Charleston County, which includes many of the Carolina Sea Islands, is composed of soils that put moderate to severe limitations on land use for urban development. The soil has poor load-bearing capacities, in addition to the prevailing poor drainage. Thus, financing for development must include provisions for land improvement as well as adequate drainage systems. Of the 2,614 square miles of land within the BCD region, only 5 percent has been developed for urban use; remaining portions of the coastal region are primarily rural.[6] Slightly more than half of the area is forest and woodlands. The marsh and swamplands, nearly a quarter of the total, grow little but marsh weeds, owing to the ebb and flow of daily tidal waters. These lands are flat and dangerous; there are reports of unfortunate islanders' being caught in "suckholes" or "mashmud" and never returning. The overall pattern of land use is summarized in Table 1.

Few bridges, with the exception of wooden crossings, connected

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
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havens of the worlde" where "without danger all the shippes in the worlde myght be harbored."[1]

The coastal region of which St. Helena Island forms a part is, as Ribaut described it, "a country full of havens, rivers and islandes." Deep tidal rivers cut and divide the land into numerous islands of varying sizes, and the islands themselves are interlaced by broad tidal creeks. These facts recommended the region to the Spanish, French, and English as an ideal place for settlement, for as Robert Sandford, "Secretary and Chief Register for the Lords Proprietors of their County of Clarendon" in Carolina, said in 1666:

> the whole Country is nothing else but severall Islands made by the various intervenings of Rivers and Creeks, yett are they firme good Lands (excepting what is Marsh) nor of soe smale a seize, but to continne many of them thousands of acres of rich habitable wood land, whose very bankes are washed by River or Creek, which besides the fertility adde such a comodiousnesse for portage as few Countryes are equally happy in.[2]

These geographic conditions have also made for the isolation of the region. The soil is a light sand which makes road building difficult. The numerous marshes have to be crossed by causeways and the rivers by long bridges. It requires, therefore, a considerable outlay of capital to provide modern transportation facilities for the Sea Islands. As a result, most of them are still without bridges and good roads; they have been left to develop as they might. Today, in going to St. Helena Island, one must cross three rivers and two islands before one at last

[1] Jeannette T. Connor (ed.), *Jean Ribaut, The Whole & True Discoverye of Terra Florida*, pp. 90-91.
[2] A. S. Salley, Jr. (ed.), *Narratives of Early Carolina*, p. 101.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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land and attracted immediate attention, for Great Britain was at that time importing annually 600,000 pounds of indigo from France at the rate of about £150,000 sterling. The following year Parliament allowed a bounty of 6 pence a pound on indigo from the British colonies, and indigo culture at once grew in the favor of South Carolina planters. By 1754 the export from Charles Town had reached 216,924 pounds, and on the eve of the Revolution it had mounted to more than a million and a half pounds.[7]

Indigo had become, next to rice, the most important source of wealth in the province. Moses Lindo, a London Jew and expert indigo sorter, had done more to stimulate the growth and the excellence of the dye than any other man in South Carolina.[8] As surveyor and inspector-general of indigo for South Carolina, he taught the planters to distinguish the grades and to improve the cultivation of the plant and the manufacture of the dye. The prices were usually excellent, ranging generally from 4 to 6 shillings a pound.

A light, dry soil was best suited to indigo culture; hence it was cultivated in considerable quantities on the Sea Islands. During the colonial period both the annual and perennial plants were grown. About 1760 Governor Glen wrote that the plant most frequently used in South Carolina was the annual, the sort generally cultivated in the West Indies.[9] The perennial, however, was less trouble

[7] *Year Book*, City of Charleston, 1883, pp. 402-403.

[8] B. A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, chap. III.

[9] "A Description of South Carolina," in Carroll, *Historical Collections*, II, 203. George Milligan, writing in 1763, quotes "an ingenious planter" as saying that there was in the province a great variety of seed, "and from every sort good indigo may be made but none answers so well in this colony as the true Guatimala." Carroll, *op. cit.*, II, 533.